



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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April 3, 2008

Mr. Phil Alperson
Montgomery County BRAC Coordinator
Office of the County Executive
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Alperson:

This is in response to your March 19, 2008, electronic message regarding State funding of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)-related capital projects. Enclosed please find a response from Mr. Larry A. Bowers, chief operating officer, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), to Dr. David Lever, executive director, Interagency Committee for Public School Construction, regarding comments on the effects of BRAC on school construction in Montgomery County. I believe you will find our comments in agreement with your assessment of the impact of BRAC on MCPS.

Respectfully,

Jerry D. Weast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JDW:vnb

Enclosure

Copy to:
Mr. Bowers
Mr. Lavorgna

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

850 Hungerford Drive, Room 122 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850 ♦ 301-279-3381



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March 26, 2008

Dr. David Lever, Executive Director
Interagency Committee for Public School Construction
State of Maryland
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Lever:

This is in response to your memorandum dated March 6, 2008, requesting the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to comment on the proposed procedure that will allow the State to participate in funding Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)-related capital projects. In Montgomery County, BRAC will have a more limited effect than in other parts of the Washington Metropolitan Area. In Montgomery County, BRAC will result in the expansion of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda by reassigning services currently provided at the Walter Reed Medical Center in the District of Columbia. Our most recent estimates indicate this will increase the current 8,000-member workforce at the Naval Medical Center by no more than 2,500 additional employees. To put this in perspective, over the past two years, Montgomery County payroll employment increased by an average 5,800 jobs per year. Projections indicate higher levels of annual job growth once the county is through the economic downturn.

Enrollment Impact

MCPS does not believe that an additional 2,500 jobs proposed for the National Naval Medical Center will have an appreciable impact on school system enrollment. This is the case for a number of reasons outlined below.

First, the increase in jobs at the National Naval Medical Center could result in increasing demand for housing in the Bethesda area. However, the Bethesda community is mostly built out; therefore, an increase in demand for housing is more likely to increase the market value of the existing housing rather than increase the number of households in the area. The only significant amount of new housing in the Bethesda area is found in the Bethesda Central Business District where a number of high-rise projects are either under construction or will be in the future. This type of housing, however, generates very few school-age children due to the urban nature of these projects. In addition, in the case of Bethesda, new high-rise housing is designed for the upscale market with rents and condominium prices comparable to more traditional single-family detached and townhouse units.

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Second, employees who will work at the National Naval Medical Center could live further from Bethesda, in other parts of Montgomery County, or the Washington Metropolitan Area. This would make the enrollment impact more dispersed and difficult to attribute to the BRAC realignment. In Montgomery County, Clarksburg is the last area of the county with a significant amount of new housing being planned and built. In other areas of the county, new housing projects are predominately high-density in-fill projects located near METRO stations. These projects, like the high-rise buildings in Bethesda, generate few school-age children.

It should be noted that many of the proposed jobs at the National Naval Medical Center are jobs previously held at the Walter Reed Medical Center and may not result in many employees relocating. Unlike some of the BRAC realignments, Walter Reed and the National Naval medical centers are in close proximity, which could result in employees retaining their place of residence.

Comments on Proposed State Procedures

With respect to the proposed State procedures, it is not clear how wide of an area around a BRAC location would be eligible for State funding for capital projects. Based on the proposed procedures, it appears that the State would only consider funding capital projects that are in the immediate vicinity of the BRAC facility. We believe it would be extremely difficult to determine enrollment impact solely based on the BRAC realignment in Montgomery County.

Section 3.a. of the "Conclusions and Recommendations" states that "the State should support planning approval and funding, but at levels that can be justified through the current enrollment methodology." This practice will lead to under allocating capacity and failure to prepare for the BRAC impact in the most impacted jurisdictions. The State should allow Local Education Agencies to master plan larger additions and provide add alternates that would be considered for State funding when a project is bid. Planning approval for master planned BRAC additions should be part of the Interagency for Public School Construction's decision-making process.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the State's proposed funding approaches to BRAC-related capital projects. Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Mr. Joseph Lavorgna, acting director, Department of Facilities Management, at 240-314-1060.

Sincerely,



Larry A. Bowers
Chief Operating Officer

LAB:jlc

Copy to:

Members of the Board of Education
Dr. Weast